

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BAMAKO 01325 01 OF 02 081600Z

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1176

INFO AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAMAKO 1325

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ML UV MILI

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT-MALI-UPPER VOLTA DISPUTE

REF: STATE 068639

1. TOWARD THE END OF MY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MOUSSA TRAORE ON APRIL 4, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTTEL, I SAID THAT U.S. GOVERNMENT HOPED THAT MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE WOULD BE SETTLED PEACEFULLY AND AMICABLY. THIS STATEMENT LIT THE FUSE ON THE ROCKET. THE USUALLY VERY QUIET, CONTAINED AND DIGNIFIED PRESIDENT BECAME HIGHLY AGITATED AND DELIVERED WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A TIRADE FOR AN UNINTERRUPTED THIRTY MINUTES. DISTILLING A MUCH MORE DISCURSIVE OUTBURST HIS MAIN POINTS WERE:

1) MALIANS IN UPPER VOLTA WERE STILL BEING MISTREATED. ALL OF THEIR GOODS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM, THEY CANNOT WORK, AND ARE NOT PERMITTED TO LEAVE. THEREFORE, THEY WILL SIMPLY DIE OF STARVATION AND "IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THE UPPER VOLTANS HAD EXECUTED THEM AS THEY ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO DO". UNTIL THEY WERE EITHER PERMITTED TO RESUME THEIR LIVELIHOOD OR THE BORDER WAS OPENED AND THEY WERE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO MALI, HE DID NOT SEE HOW THERE COULD BE ANY PROGRESS IN SETTLING THE DISPUTE.

2) HE HAD THAT MORNING RECEIVED "AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE" WHEN

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BAMAKO 01325 01 OF 02 081600Z

THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE INFORMED HIM THROUGH THE MALIAN

EMBASSY IN PARIS THAT FRANCE WAS GOING TO DELIVER CONVENTIONAL ARMS TO UPPER VOLTA IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY EQUILIBRIUM. (CO-INCIDENTALLY, THE SAME MORNING THE NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS. IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN INTERESTING CEREMONY.) THE PRESIDENT SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THIS DECISION ON THE PART OF FRANCE DID NOT BOTHER HIM AT ALL, A STATEMENT HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES, AND THAT HIS REPLY TO FRANCE WAS SIMPLY THAT MALI TOOK NOTE (PRIS ACTES) OF THE FRENCH DECISION. HE SAID HE DID NOT CARE IF FRANCE GAVE UPPER VOLTA ATOMIC BOMBS, THAT BOTH THE FRENCH AND UPPER VOLTANS KNEW THE MILITARY QUALITIES OF THE MALIANS AND THEY BOTH KNEW THAT WITH THE FIRST OFFENSIVE MOVE WITH NO MATTER WHAT WEAPONS, UPPER VOLTA WOULD BE DEFEATED.

3) HE THEN ASKED HIS CHEF DE CABINET, OUMAR MAKALOU, TO GET A COPY OF A LETTER THAT HE HAD SENT TO PRESIDENT LAMIZANA ON DECEMBER 11, PROPOSING AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT TO THE BORDER DISPUTE. HE ASKED ME TO TRANSMIT THIS LETTER TO WASHINGTON SO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES WOULD SEE THAT HE HAD ACTED IN GOOD FAITH. (LETTER BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTEL.) AFTER THIS LETTER HAD BEEN TRANSMITTED, THE EVENTS OF DECEMBER, I.E. THE HARASSMENT OF MALIANS, HAD TAKEN PLACE. FURTHER, LAMIZANA HAD REJECTED THE PROPOSALS MADE IN THIS LETTER, WHICH WERE IDENTICAL WITH THOSE SUBSEQUENTLY ADOPTED AT THE MEETING IN LOME OF DECEMBER 27, EXCEPT FOR HIS PROPOSAL FOR A WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS (POINT 1). AFTER THE KILLING OF MALIANS IN BOBO-DIOULASSO, HE SAID, HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO WITHDRAW HIS TROOPS UNTIL THE SAFETY OF MALIANS WAS ASSURED.

4) IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE EXPECTED A RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES, HE SAID THAT OF COURSE IF THE FRENCH SUPPLY WEAPONS TO UPPER VOLTA TO THE EXTENT THAT THE VOLTANS FELT THAT THEY HAD MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER MALI, THEY WOULD ATTACK. HE REITERATED WITH FIERCE LAUGHTER THAT THEY WOULD REGRET ANY SUCH ACTION.

5) HE SAID THAT I COULD TELL MY GOVERNMENT THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTACK UPPER VOLTA, THAT HE HAD NO DESIRE FOR WAR, BUT THAT HE WOULD DEFEND HIS COUNTRY AND HIS PEOPLE TO THE EXTENT OF HIS ABILITY.

6) THE PRESIDENT THEN GOT A VERY LARGE DOSSIER WHICH HE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BAMAKO 01325 01 OF 02 081600Z

SPREAD ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF US. HE BEGAN READING TO ME FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT DOCUMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN SUPPLIED BY THE FRENCH, ESTABLISHING THE COLONY OF UPPER VOLTA AND WHICH STATED THAT ALL QUESTIONS UNRESOLVED WERE TO BE SETTLED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNOR GENERAL. BUT, SAID THE PRESIDENT, THE FRENCH HAD NEVER GIVEN HIM THE DECREES OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. THE DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED BY THE FRENCH WAS THEREFORE INCOMPLETE. HE FURTHER SAID THAT HE

HAD WRITTEN TO THE FRENCH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE REGARDING THE MAP OF 1960 ON WHICH THE UPPER VOLTANS WERE BASING THEIR BOUNDARY CLAIM. HE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A REPLY FROM THE INSTITUTE, WHICH HE TRIED TO FIND IN THE DOSSIER BUT IN HIS AGITATED STATE WAS UNABLE TO DO. HOWEVER, TRAORE SAID THAT THE INSTITUTE'S REPLY NOTED THAT THE MAP IN QUESTION HAD NO JURIDICAL STATUS AND TO THE EXTENT THAT THE MAP DEPARTED FROM THE JURIDICAL TEXTS DEFINING THE BOUNDARY THE MAP IS WRONG.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BAMAKO 01325 02 OF 02 081608Z

51

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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAMAKO 1325

7) I ASKED HIM WHAT PROGRESS THE JURIDICAL COMMISSION EXAMINING THE DOCUMENTATION WAS MAKING. HE REPLIED THAT IT WAS CONTINUING ITS WORK AND HE THEN CONTRASTED HIS POSITION WITH THAT OF PRESIDENT LAMIZANA. THE LATTER, HE SAID, HAD STATED THAT IF THE FINDINGS OF THE JURIDICAL COMMISSION WERE NOT TO THE LIKING OF UPPER VOLTA HE, LAMIZANA, WOULD APPEAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. ON THE OTHER HAND IF THE JURIDICAL COMMISSION FOUND THAT THE BOUNDARY RAN THROUGH BAMAKO, HE PRESIDENT TRAORE, WOULD HAPPILY SAY "TAKE BAMAKO".

8) HE THEN ADVERTED TO THE U.S. POSITION ON FOREIGN MILITARY SALES TO MALI. HE SAID THAT MALI HAD ASKED FOR A LANGUAGE LABORATORY. OBVIOUSLY HE WAS NOT GOING TO TEACH HIS SOLDIERS ENGLISH FOR THE PURPOSE OF INVADING UPPER

VOLTA. AS FAR AS THE PARACHUTES WERE CONCERNED, IT WAS THE AMERICANS WHO HAD FIRST TRAINED THE MALIAN PARACHUTISTS AND WHO HAD UNDERTAKEN TO MAINTAIN THE PARACHUTE COMPANY. HE DID NOT WANT THE PARACHUTES FOR THE PURPOSE OF DROPPING TROOPS ON UPPER VOLTA BUT RATHER BECAUSE THE OLD PARACHUTES WERE WEARING OUT AND HE DID NOT WISH HIS SOLDIERS TO LOSE THEIR SKILLS BECAUSE OF LACK OF EQUIPMENT. HE HIMSELF WAS A PARACHUTIST AND WHILE HE STILL KNEW HOW TO JUMP OUT OF A PLANE HE HAD PROBABLY FORGOTTEN WHAT TO DO AS HE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BAMAKO 01325 02 OF 02 081608Z

APPROACHED THE GROUND.

9) THE PRESIDENT CLOSED THE CONVERSATION BY REITERATING THAT HE DID NOT WANT A WAR, THAT HE WAS NOT GOING TO ATTACK, BUT THAT HE WOULD DEFEND HIS COUNTRY AND HIS PEOPLE TO THE LAST MALIAN. HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BOUNDARY, THAT HE HAD NOT EVEN BEEN BORN WHEN THE FRONTIER WAS FIXED AND THAT IF THE UPPER VOLTANS COULD PRESENT ANY DOCUMENT OTHER THAN AN ERRONEOUS MAP TO SUPPORT THEIR CLAIM HE WOULD WILLINGLY ACCEPT THEIR POSITION.

2. COMMENT: I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE PRESIDENT IN SUCH AN EMOTIONALLY AGITATED STATE AND IN FACT I DID NOT KNOW THAT HE WAS CAPABLE OF SO PERFORMING. IT IS CLEAR THAT HE BITTERLY RESENTS THE FRENCH DECISION TO SUPPLY ARMS TO UPPER VOLTA. IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT OUR DECISION TO DELAY DELIVERY OF THE PARACHUTES RANKLES. THE PRESIDENT OBVIOUSLY FEELS A DEEP SENSE OF BETRAYAL BY THE TREATMENT TO WHICH MALIANS RESIDING IN UPPER VOLTA HAVE BEEN ALLEGEDLY SUBJECTED--HE CONTRASTED THAT TREATMENT WITH THE TRANQUILITY OF UPPER VOLTANS IN MALI PARTICULARLY AFTER HE HAD MADE WHAT HE CONSIDERED A REASONABLE PROPOSAL IN GOOD FAITH. AFTER THIS DISCUSSION I DO NOT SEE HOW THERE CAN BE ANY RESOLUTION OF THIS DISPUTE UNLESS AND UNTIL UPPER VOLTA MAKES THE GESTURE OF OPENING THE BORDER TO PERMIT MALIANS TO LEAVE. FINALLY, MY ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE FRENCH DECISION TO DELIVER ARMS TO UPPER VOLTA, RATHER THAN ESTABLISHING AN EQUILIBRIUM, HAS HAD A DESTABILIZING EFFECT.

3. OTHER SUBJECTS DEALT WITH DURING OUR MEETING WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF OTHER CABLES.

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